

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

DECEMBER, 1981

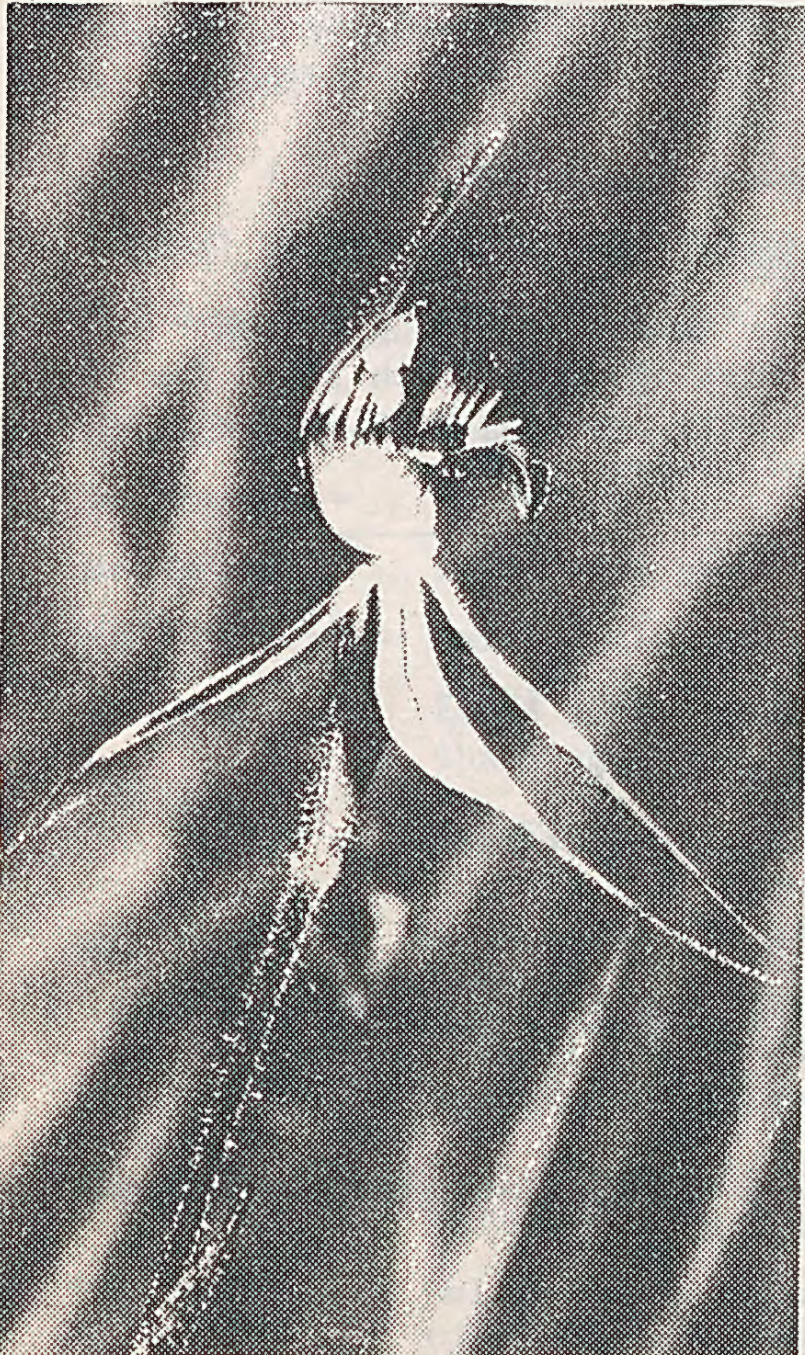
EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting . . 4th December - "Reptiles" - Mr. R. Pails.

Meeting . . 5th February - "Aborigines in Victoria" -
Mr. B. Cooper.

Excursion . . 6th December - Sunday - Full Day : Christmas Excursion -
Mt. Emu, Lake Goldsmith. Leader: Mr. L. Millar.

Excursion . . 7th February - Sunday - Full Day : Glenpark, Barkstead.
Leader : Mr. J. Harris.



GREEN-COMB SPIDER ORCHID

(CALEDENIA DILATATA)

Courtesy
L. Millar.

6 - 18"

Flowers 2 - 4",
long yellowish
segment with
a red stripe.

Large tongue
with erect
green comb
like sides and
crimson apex.

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| President: Dr. F. HARRAP | Phone 30 1651 |
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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

NEW MEMBER :

The President welcomed Mr. Brian Walker, wishing him a long and happy association with our Club.

DECEMBER EXCURSION :

Meet at Beaufort at the bandstand at 10.30 a.m., or at the Lake Goldsmith School at 1.00 p.m. The school is situated at the east end of the lake on the Beaufort - Lake Goldsmith - Skipton Road.

SYLLABUS ITEMS :

Your committee welcomes suggestions for next year's syllabus of meetings and excursions. It would be appreciated if these were handed in by the next committee meeting which is on January 27th.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICE-BEARERS -

must be handed in no later than the meeting on 5th February, 1982. The Annual Meeting is on March 5th. The committee consists of 10 members including President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

V.F.N.C.A. CAMP-OUT 1982

LABOUR DAY WEEKEND - MARCH 6th - 8th, 1982.

LA TROBE VALLEY.

Venue for Meetings : Australian Postal Institute Hall,
Hazlewood Rd.,
MORWELL.

Proposed Excursions : Bulga and Tarra Valley National Parks.
: Wirilda Proposed National Park.
: Thomson River Dam Area.

Accommodation arrangements can be obtained from Miss Burgess.

ENFIELD FOREST EXCURSION - September 20th

This completes the report, commenced in the October Newsletter, on our excursion to Berringa.

Flora noted included Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) in flower, Tree ferns, soft and rough, Mothersshield fern, Maidenhair Fern, Bracken Fern, Early Nancy (*Anguillaria dioica*), Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*), Yellow Star (*Hypoxis glabella*), Tall Sundew (*Droseraceae auriculata*) with crane fly, Scented Sundew (*D. Whittakeri*), Pink heath (*Epacris impressa*), Narrow-leaved Bitter Pea (*Daviesia virgata*), Beard Heath (*Leucopogon virgatus*), Ivy-leaf violet (*Viola hederacea*), Wallaby Grass (*Danthora* Species), Common Hovea (*Hovea heterophylla*), Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Matted Bush-pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*), Small Grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea minor*).

Thanks to Frank for helping us have a most enjoyable afternoon.

J. Netherway.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS AT OUR MEETING ON NOVEMBER 6th.

Mr. Reynolds - Salvation Jane (*Echium vulgare*), growing in Simpson St.

Mr. Ambrose - Rufous Whistler in Burnbank St.

Dr. Harrap - 60 Cattle Egret in Sebastopol area.

Mr. Hooper - Koala with baby in pouch, Mt. Clear Rd.

Miss Burgess - Large Koala, Ballarat North.

Mr. Lumb - Koala eating tips of native plants other than eucalypts.

Mr. Fink - Peregrine Falcons in Brisbane Ranges
- 1 egg hatched.

Mr. Fry- Nests in the same pine tree at Russell Square -
White-faced Heron - 2 chicks hatched, one died.
Magpie Lark - 2 chicks hatched, one died.

Three Quail Thrush, Enfield.

Mr. Hawley - Two spur wing plovers hatched in the Bishop's Palace subdivision.

Mr. Jamieson - Mallee species growing in the vicinity of Djerriwarrah Creek.

MT. BECKWORTH EXCURSION, 8/11/81.

Eighteen of us journeyed to the Mt. Beckworth area on a warm sunny November Sunday. A long morning's walk with the Olive-backed Oriole's call always in the background, revealed many birds, including several Rainbow Birds, and numerous plants.

Lunch was taken at the dam, and while resting here, an excellent sighting of the Mistletoe Bird was made. The afternoon walk included, at the suggestion of the Creswick District Forester, an inspection of a controlled autumn burn area to see what had been the effect on trees and shrubs, and to see what regeneration had occurred. A separate plant list was made for this area. During this walk we saw, to everyone's delight, an Owlet Nightjar, Dusky Woodswallows feeding young which had flown the nest but which were still rather unsure of themselves, and a Painted Quail which flew from a nest containing three young.

The evening was so fine and warm that several of the group remained for tea while others reluctantly returned home to other duties.

Plant List : Pelargonium rodneyanum, Blue Sun Orchids, Fairies Aprons, Chocolate Lily (Dichopogon strictus), Pimelea, Pimpernel (Anagallis arvensis), Wiry Buttons, Burchardia umbellata, Beard-orchid, Grass Trigger-Plant (Stylidium graminifolium), Dilwynnia, Onion Orchid, Common Beard-heath (Leucopogon virgatum), Scented Sun-orchid (Thelymitra aristata), Leptospermum, Tiny Trigger-plant (Stylidium perpusillum), Small Grass-tree (Xanthorrhoea minor), Salmon Sun-orchid (Thelymitra rubra), Rabbit-ears (T. Antennifera), Bulbine Lily (Bulbine bulbosa).

Autumn burn plant list : Salmon Sun-orchid, Scented Sun-orchid, Dotted Sun-orchid (T. ixioides), Beard-orchid, Rabbit-ears, Golden moths (Diuris pedunculata), Onion Orchid, Common Flat-pea (Platylobium obtusangulum), Black-anther Flax-lily (Dianella revoluta), Chocolate Lily (Dichopogon strictus), Wahlenbergia, Woodruff, Yams, Drosera, Bulbine Lily, Burchardia umbellata, Brunonia, Xanthorrhoea minor, Stylidium graminifolium.

Bird List : Eastern Shrike-tit, Red-browed Finch, Olive-backed Oriole, Rainbow Bee-eater, Laughing Kookaburra, Grey Shrike-thrush, Eastern Rosella, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Babbler, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Brown Goshawk,

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Fuscous, Yellow-winged, White-eared, and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Blue Wren, Welcome Swallow, Red-wattle Bird, Brown Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote, Rufous Whistler, Mistletoe Bird, Owlet Nightjar, Dusky Woodswallow, White-winged Chough, Painted Quail, Galah.

J. Netherway.

NOVEMBER CAMPOUT

Langi Ghiran Forest Park consists of two prominent peaks Mount Langi Ghiran ("The Home of the Black Cockatoo") in the North and Mount Gorrin to the South. Between these two peaks, in the saddle and on the Eastern side, was the site for our camp-out. Eleven members and friends enjoyed a very pleasant time in the wilderness area where many large, old and hollowed trees of Eucalyptus species such as *E. melliodora*, yellow box, *E. viminalis*, manna gum, *E. obliqua*, messmate, *E. radiata*, narrow leaf peppermint, and *E. rubida*, candlebark provided shelter for a variety of fauna species. This area has not been burnt for 30 years, although there is the occasional lightning strike. Firewood was readily available and campfires were enjoyed, but we did miss the musicians. The Land Conservation Council propose a State Park larger than the present Forest Park.

We amateur, amateur birdos could only identify 30 species of birds, although many more were heard. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos vied with the Grey Shrike Thrushes and Kookaburras for being the most vocal. No Black Cockatoos were seen.

Over 100 plant species, including 9 orchid species, were identified including *Leptospermum nitidum*, shiny tea tree, and *Leucopogon neurophyllus*, Mt. William beard heath.

Four lizard species were seen - shingle back, lace dragon, skinks and two "sultana" lizards.

Although there was evidence of echidnas only one was sighted. The grey kangaroo and black-tailed wallabies were not far away and they viewed us from a distance. No snakes were seen.

On Saturday morning, before the main party arrived, four of us followed the blue markers off and on to the summit of Mt. Gorrin. The track was well defined until we came to the granite massifs. We were dwarfed by some, but managed to climb

up and over the smaller rocks. Magnificent views were had of the surrounding countryside and peaks easily identified included Mt. Cole, Mt. Misery, Mt. Beckworth, Mt. Elephant, Mt. Warrenheip, Mt. Buninyong, The Grampians as well as Mt. Langi Ghiran.. We were slow with our cameras when a lizard was seen drinking at a shallow rock pool. However, we were ready with our cameras when this same lizard approached a plastic bag of sultanas and bit the plastic bag. Sultanas were immediately spread on the rock by us and were soon devoured by the "sultana" lizard and his mate. *Leptospermum nitidum* was growing prolifically on the summit and a few plants of *Prostanthera rotundifolia*, round-leaf mint bush were seen.

After lunch the whole party walked up the fire track, passing through shoulder high bracken fern which had a few orchid species and *Drymorphila cyanocarpa*, turquoise berry, scattered through it. *Leucopogon neurophyllus* and *Banksia marginata* were growing nearer the Hidden Lagoon - our goal for the afternoon. The track normally runs through the lagoon, when it is dry. *Villarsia reniformis*, running marshflower was flowering prolifically as well as a marsh daisy.

On Sunday morning we observed the male and female Sacred Kingfishers with skinks fly to their nest in the hollow of a candlebark. Before lunch one of the foresters came to tell us about the area.

After lunch we went to the Western side, saw the Aboriginal cave, then the other area suitable for camping, where the blue markers start for the climb to Mt. Gorrin. We had done it the easy way. A detour had to be made past a boggy patch of road, then on to the Apex Picnic Ground. A short visit was made to the bluestone walled dam which is Ararat's water supply, then home.

We were fortunate to have a fine week-end in pleasant surroundings - a marvellous tonic.

Helen Burgess.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS - FELLS GULLY and OTHER AREAS

Delightful color slides were shown by Laurie Millar at our November meeting. Close up shots allowed us a detailed view of birds nesting and feeding their young. The delicate beauty of the Mistletoe Birds' nest was well captured, also the feeding of its young. The berries pass through their bodies in half an hour. A Crested Bellbird was seen feeding a Chinese Junk to its offspring. On viewing the nest of the Painted Quail we learnt that when the eggs hatch, the shells fall completely in half.

At Fells Gully where a lot of the bird photographs were taken, the Acacia Armata is in bloom but it has been sprayed along the roads. There has been good nesting this year and it is one of the few places where the White Winged Triller builds fairly low down. The 12 - 15 pairs of Gull Billed Terns haven't had much success in rearing young at Lake Goldsmith this year, but the Brolgas succeeded in rearing two. These were the only pair of chicks banded there since 1970. In March, 1980, 35 - 40 Brolgas were photographed in a flock at Stoneleigh.

The flora slides included Stackhousia Hardenbergia, Showy Parrot Pea, the Turning and the Common Fringe Lily, Early Nancy and Cowslip and Waxlip Orchids. Everlastings were found blooming in a swamp. These haven't been described as yet but are allied to the Alpine Everlasting.

Next we were transported to Central Australia with the highlights being a Ghost gum at Trephina Gorge, a very thin dingo at Kings Canyon, Red tailed Kingfisher at Katherine Creek (West of Oodnadatta), Wild donkeys, Blood Mulga shedding its bark and very thick growth of Thryptomene at Mount Connor.

A Python and a Knob tailed gecko in the Musgrave Ranges added interest. To conclude we visited a Talcum carver at Lindhurst and near there a large Ochre pit. Frank Harrap extended the club's thanks for an enjoyable, interesting review of nature.

J. Spicer.

A MURMURATION OF ... STARLINGS

On the last excursion to Donovan's Marsh, Clunes Swamp and Fells' Gully the subject of Nouns of Assemblage came up. In fact we were talking of the terms applied to groups of birds and animals. A "charm of gold finches" was the first to come to mind. Others were a "pride of lions" and one I remembered incorrectly as "a murmuration of larks". The correct version is a "murmuration of starlings", larks collectively are known as an "exaltation". There is reference in about AD1430 to "an exaltation of larks" and it is noted in the Standard of 26th September 1883 that "everyone with any pretence to be gentlefolk spoke of an exaltation of larks". The dictionary defines exaltation as being "elation of feeling, a state of rapturous emotion".

"Herds of cattle" and "flocks of sheep" are common-place. So too are "coveys of partridges and quail", and "gaggles of geese". How about "wisp of snipe", "muster of peacocks", "covert of coots". Again there are a "shrewdness of apes", a "labor of moles", a "rout of wolves", a "skulk of foxes" and a "sloth of bears". A "leap of leopards" and a "murder of crows" convey something more sinister, perhaps.

"A pride of lions" and "a fall of woodcock" - I thought of pride coming before a fall - unfortunately lions and woodcock would not occur in the same habitat.

F. Harrap.

TIGER SNAKES (C.S.I.R.O., Scifile No. 4)

The water-loving tiger snake is primarily a frog eater, but it will try just about any small creature it can find.

Zoologists from the Division of Wildlife Research studied the hunting habits of the snake and analysed the stomach contents of a number of them during a wildlife survey at Lake Cowal near West Wyalong, NSW.

They found that the tiger snake preyed on rabbits, rats, mice, spiders, grasshoppers, stick insects, beetles, ants, moths and centipedes. Chicks from 18 bird species were also included in the snake's diet, including two species of ibis and ducks, gulls, pigeons, kingfishers, cormorants, plovers, swallows, warblers, wagtails and honeyeaters.

Tiger snakes were found up to two kilometres from the shore in birds nests in lignum trees. But while the tiger snake preyed on some birds, it was in turn preyed on by such birds as the white ibis, whistling kite, brown goshawk, swamp harrier, kookaburra and pied butcherbird.